

Message Text

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ACTION SCSE-00

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FM AMCONSUL NICE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1158

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E.O. 11652 : N/A

TAGS : CDES, MN (BERKENFIELD, EDNA)

SUBJECT : DEATH CASE : EDNA BERKENFIELD

REF : STATE 209089

1. SENATOR JAVITS INTERESTED.

2. MRS BERKENFIELD DIED ON AUGUST 19, 1976 AFTER COLLAPSING IN CASINO OF LOEWS HOTEL, MONTE CARLO. SHE WAS DEAD ON ARRIVAL AT HOSPITAL OF MONACO.

3. CONSULATE RECEIVED PHONE CALL ON MORNING OF AUGUST 20 FROM SOMOTHA FUNERAL ESTABLISHMENT IN MONACO, INFORMING OF DEATH OF MRS BERKENFIELD, AND STATING THAT THEY HAD RECEIVED A CALL FROM MR ROBERT LEWIS, OF NEW YORK. SOMOTHA HAD SUGGESTED TO MR LEWIS THAT HE CALL THE US CONSULATE IN NICE.

4. IN AFTERNOON OF AUGUST 20 MR LEWIS, OF FRANK CAMPBELL FUNERAL HOME IN NEW YORK, CALLED CONSULATE. HE GAVE INSTRUCTIONS FOR REMAINS TO BE SHIPPED TO NEW YORK, GAVE INFORMATION ON MRS BERKENFIELD S DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH, NAMES OF PARENTS, ETC. NECESSARY TO ESTABLISH MONEGASQUE DEATH CERTIFICATE, AND WAS REQUESTED TO DEPOSIT FUNDS WITH STATE DEPARTMENT TO COVER COSTS. STATE 208558 OF AUGUST 21 INFORMING OF DEPOSIT OF FUNDS WAS RECEIVED BY POST OVER WEEKEND.

5. MR LEWIS WAS TOLD IN TELCON THAT ONE WEEK TO TEN DAYS IS NORMAL TIME REQUIRED TO TRANSPORT REMAINS FROM MONACO TVNBW YORK, DUE TO THE CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF PAPERWORK INVOLVED. SPECIAL AUTHORIZATIONS HAVE TO BE OBTAINED TO TRANSPORT REMAINS

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FROM MONACO TO FRANCE (I.E. TO REACH NICE AIRPORT) AS WELL AS

FROM FRANCE TO US. SPACE ALSO HAS TO BE RESERVED ON PLANES A FEW DAYS IN ADVANCE. ALMOST ALL OFFICIAL OFFICES IN MONACO ARE CLOSED ON SATURDAY AND SUNDAY.

6. ON MORNING OF MONDAY AUGUST 23 CONSULATE WAS INFORMED BY MONACO FUNERAL ESTABLISHMENT THAT RESERVATIONS HAD BEEN MADE FOR COFFIN OF MRS BERKENFIELD TO TRAVEL ON FLIGHT AF412 LEAVING NICE 18.00 ON AUGUST 26 TO PARIS, AND FOR CONTINUATION ON FLIGHT AF077 ON AUGUST 27, ARRIVING AT 15.15 LOCAL TIME AT NEW YORK KENNEDY AIRPORT. THIS INFO WAS RELAYED TO MR LEWIS BY PHONE ON AUGUST 23, AND HE WAS TOLD AGAIN THAT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO EFFECT SHIPMENT IN A SHORTER TIME LIMIT.

FYI - (THIS INFO HAS NOT BEEN RELAYED TO CAMPBELL FUNERAL HOME, NEW YORK, OR TO FAMILY) : AS MRS BERKENFIELD WAS DEAD ON ARRIVAL AT HOSPITAL, THE TRIBUNAL IN MONACO HAD TO MAKE A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT AN AUTOPSY WAS TO BE PERFORMED. THE FINAL DECISION, TAKEN ON AFTERNOON OF AUGUST 23, WAS NOT TO PERFORM AN AUTOPSY, THE TRIBUNAL BEING SATISFIED WITH THE REPORT OF THE DOCTOR WHO CERTIFIED THE DEATH. HOWEVER, THIS DECISION REQUIRED THREE DAYS TO BE RENDERED AND BURIAL PERMIT WAS THEREFORE ONLY OBTAINED, (I.E. BODY WAS ONLY MADE AVAILABLE TO SOMOHA FUNERAL HOME FOR PREPARATION FOR TRANSPORT) ON EVENING OF AUGUST 23. THEREAFTER, TIME IS NECESSARY TO EMBALM AND PREPARE THE BODY FOR SHIPMENT.

NO MENTION WAS MADE TO US FUNERAL HOME OR FAMILY OF POSSIBLE AUTOPSY,, AS WE CONSIDERED THIS AN UNNECESSARY WORRY FOR THE FAMILY BEFORE A DEFINITE DECISION ON THIS POINT HAD BEEN REACHED.

NO UNNECESSARY DELAY HAS BEEN ENCOUNTERED BY THE FUNERAL HOME OR POST. WE ARE DEPENDENT UPON RECEIVING LEGAL DECISIONS AND AUTHORIZATIONS FROM MONEGASQUE AUTHORITIES. IN BOTH TELCONS WITH MR LEWIS, TIME OF ONE WEEK TO TEN DAYS WAS STATED AS PERIOD NECESSARY FOR SHIPMENT.

SOMOHA, (THE ONLY FUNERAL COMPANY IN MONACO) HAS ALWAYS BEEN MOST COOPERATIVE IN CASES OF DEATH: THEY DO NOT WAIT FOR CONFIRMATION OF PAYMENT BEFORE COMMENCING FORMALITIES AND PREPARATION FOR SHIPMENT OF BODIES TO THE US.

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WE FEEL THAT THE REACTION OF MRS BERKENFIELDS FAMILY MAY BE INFLUENCED BY THE SHOCK OF SUDDEN LOSS OF A CLOSE RELATIVE.

MURPHY

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